Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1-7 (Canceled)

8. (Currently amended): Sample observation method comprising steps of:

acquiring, at a first scale factor, a reference sample image not including any defect on a sample with an imager, based on information on a defect on the sample detected by an inspection apparatus;

moving the sample in a viewing field of the imager and acquiring a defective sample image including the defect on the sample at ~~a~~ the first scale factor with the imager, based on the information on the defect on the sample detected by the inspection apparatus;

locating the defect on the defective sample image by comparing the reference sample image and the defective sample image;

acquiring a magnified image of the located defect at a second scale factor greater than the first scale factor with the imager without moving the sample; and

displaying the magnified image of the defect on a screen.

9. (Currently amended): Sample observation method comprising the steps of:

acquiring, at a first scale factor, a reference sample image not including any defect on a sample with an imager, based on information on a defect on the sample detected by an inspection apparatus;

adjusting a position of the sample so that the defect will fall within the field of view of said imager, based on the information;

acquiring a defective sample image including the defect on the sample at ~~a~~ the first scale factor by said imager;

locating the defect on the defective sample image by comparing the reference sample image and the defective sample image;

PAGE 5/12 * RCVD AT 12/8/2003 6:10:31 PM [Eastern Standard Time] * SVR:USPTO-EFXRF-1/4 * DNIS:8729306 * CSID:6503262422 * DURATION (mm-ss):03-18

acquiring a magnified image of the located defect at a second scale factor greater than the first scale factor with said imager without changing the position of the sample; and

displaying the magnified image of the defect on a screen.

10. (Previously presented): Sample observation method according to claim 9 further comprising, subsequent to the step of acquiring a magnified image, a step of:

erasing a background from the magnified image of the located defect.

11. (Previously presented): Sample observation method according to any one of claims 8, 9, and 10, wherein the reference sample image and the defective sample images are the images of the sample captured in secondary electrons emanated from the sample by irradiation of a charged particle beam.

12. (Currently amended): An apparatus for observing samples, comprising:

image pickup means for acquiring an image of a sample;

storage means to store information of an area to be observed on the sample;

a position controller to control a position of the sample with respect to the image pickup means, based on the information stored in the storage means;

display means to display images of the sample acquired by the image pickup means; and

control means to locate a defect on the sample by comparing a plurality of images of the sample captured by the image pickup means at a first scale factor after the sample is positioned by the position controller and to control the image pickup means to acquire ~~the~~ a located defect image at a second scale factor greater than the first scale factor without changing the position of the sample.,

wherein the plurality of images includes a reference sample image acquired by positioning the sample so that a reference area that is absent any defect is positioned within a viewing field of the image pickup means,

wherein the plurality of images includes a defect sample image acquired by positioning the sample to a defect position such that a defect area that includes at least one defect is positioned within the viewing field of the image pickup means,

PAGE 6/12 * RCVD AT 12/8/2003 6:10:31 PM [Eastern Standard Time] * SVR:USPTO-EFXRF-1/4 * DNIS:8729306 * CSID:6503262422 * DURATION (mm-ss):03-18

wherein the located defect image is acquired by imaging an area of the sample determined based on a comparison of the reference sample image with the defect sample image without repositioning the sample from the defect position.

13. (Previously presented): An apparatus for observing samples, comprising:

storage means to store information on a defect on a sample detected by an external defect inspection apparatus;

image pickup means for acquiring an image of the sample;

position control means to control a position of the sample, based on the information stored in the storage means;

defect locating means to locate the defect by comparing an image of the sample not including the defect and an image of the sample including the defect, wherein both of the images are acquired at a first scale factor by the image pickup means after the sample is positioned by the position control means; and

display means to display an image of the defect located by the defect locating means and captured by the image pickup means at a second scale factor that is greater than the first scale factor without changing the position of the sample.

14. (Previously presented): An apparatus for observing samples, comprising:

image pickup means for acquiring an image of the sample;

position control means to control a position of the sample so that a defect on the sample will fall within the field of view of the image pickup means, based on information on the defect on the sample detected by an external defect inspection apparatus;

defect locating means to locate the defect by comparing an image of the sample not including the defect and an image of the sample including the defect, wherein both of the images are acquired by the image pickup means at a first scale factor after the sample is positioned by the position control means; and

display means to display an image of the defect located by the defect locating means and captured by the image pickup means at a second scale factor that is greater than the first scale factor without changing the position of the sample.

PAGE 7/12 * RCVD AT 12/8/2003 6:10:31 PM [Eastern Standard Time] * SVR:USPTO-EFXRF-1/4 * DNIS:8729306 * CSID:6503262422 * DURATION (mm-ss):03-18

15. (Previously presented): Sample observation equipment according to any one of claims 12 , 13 , and 14; wherein the image pickup means is a scanning electron microscope.

16. (Previously presented): Sample observation method according to claim 8, further comprising steps of:

moving the sample to acquire a magnified image of the reference sample with the imager;

acquiring a magnified image of the reference sample at the second scale factor with the imager; and

displaying the magnified image of the reference sample on the screen with the magnified image of the located defect.

17. (Previously presented): Sample observation method according to claim 9, further comprising steps of:

moving the sample to acquire a magnified image of the reference sample with the imager;

acquiring a magnified image of the reference sample at the second scale factor with the imager; and

displaying the magnified image of the reference sample on the screen with the magnified image of the located defect.

PAGE 8/12 * RCVD AT 12/8/2003 6:10:31 PM [Eastern Standard Time] * SVR:USPTO-EFXRF-1/4 * DNIS:8729306 * CSID:6503262422 * DURATION (mm-ss):03-18